also starring
DYNAMO JOE
FIRST COMICS
MAR. $1.25
NO. 12
$1.60 CANADA
MARS
CIRCUIT DEATH

%FIRST COMICS,
1014 DAVIS STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

READ LETTERS

If you read last month's **Warp,** you've probably been waiting for the other shoe to drop. Here it comes.

You don't really get anywhere by playing it safe. When Stan Lee was told by his publisher to go out and imitate DC's highly successful *Justice League of America,* he could have taken the company's stable of ancient heroes and made up a comic book that, well, *imitated* the *Justice League of America.* Instead, Stan came up with the *Fantastic Four,* and the rest is history.

By taking chances, you come up with greatness. And once in a while, it clicks. More often, it doesn't.

This is the last issue of **Mars.** Hey, we knew it was different — that's why we selected it out of a pile of exciting concepts (some from Big Name Pros). I do not regret it for a minute.

I think most people believe **Mars** didn't make it because of Mark and Marc's unique art style. I think that's part of it — some people picked up the book, thumbed through it, didn't see any Adams/Romita/Buscema/Perez swipes, and put it back unread.

Those people missed something. Consider yourself smarter than those guys.

But that's *only* part of it. **Mars** had a hell of a lot of uncommercial aspects. We asked you to accept a female hero. We blurred the line between hero and villain. We asked you to support an ever-evolving story, without even reassuring you the main storyline would be resolved within the first 12 issues. We couldn't tell you — that would destroy the timing, the suspense.

I remember another really exciting experimental comic book. It was published by DC in 1977, and called *Shade the Changing Man.* The creation of artist **Steve Ditko,** *Shade* was dialogued by **Michael Fleisher** and edited by **Jack C. Harris.**

It was really different — and utterly fantastic. In those embryonic days of "direct sales," *Shade* was among DC's very best selling comics ... in the specialty shops. It even sold well on the newsstands. Total sales were so good, in fact, that DC was toying with the idea of upgrading the book to monthly — something rarely done with a new title in those days.

But the blast only lasted for three issues. By the end of the third, a growing number of readers decided the resolution wasn't coming up fast enough, and sales started to slide. Fast. The book had to be cancelled with its eighth issue — just one short of the completion of the first story.

What a shame.

Some concepts simply are ahead of their time. According to published interviews, **Jim Starlin's** cosmic *Warlock* stories didn't do very well the first time around. But after cancellation, the legend grew — and Starlin's specific type of story became very popular. Charlton's entire run of **E-Man,** sold on general newsstands, did not sell as well as First Comics' first issue (sold at about 1/15 the number of outlets) nearly a decade later.

Enough of history. I hope that somehow, someday, the story of **Mars** will be back, if Mark Wheatley and Marc Hempel are willing. I hope First is still

involved with it — after I edited this, the last issue, I really missed the characters. I regret the necessity of our decision.

Mark and Marc are already busy working on other projects. I'm not sure which they are going to do, or where it will show up, but rest assured we'll let you know about it in our First Notes column, no matter who the publisher may be. Their commercial art studio remains quite busy.

You certainly haven't seen the last of **Dynamo Joe.** If the early mail indicates anything remotely resembling a trend, **Dynamo Joe's** quite a hit. Our only trick is fitting it in to everybody's schedule.

We've got our next several releases set, so it may take a bit of time. Creator/artist **Doug Rice** already has a full-time job — he's a staff production artist here at (ahem) First Comics. And writer **John Ostrander's** busy with **Grimjack, Starslayer,** and something outside of the comics field. John is busy completing his script for the world premiere, BBC-authorized *Doctor Who* play. Then John's got to help get it into production.

But **Dynamo Joe** will be back. As we're fond of saying — count on it.

First Comics' days of experimentation are hardly behind us. Wait until you see the first publication of a project so special we only hinted at it at last summer's Chicago Comicon — but the people who saw the presentation samples were knocked clean out of the state.

Next month in fact, in two weeks **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude's** *Nexus* joins the First Comics line-up. We're making one minor change in **Nexus:** we're going to be publishing it *monthly.*

And in January, **Nexus's** friend **The Badger** will be launched under the First banner.

As for February ... well, I don't want to turn this final *Read Letters* page into an excess of hype.

We deeply, deeply appreciate your support. You've got good taste; I wish there were just a couple thousand more like you.

When we finally land on Mars — and I am convinced we will — remember the people who took you there first. People like **Buster Crabbe, Ray Bradbury,** and whoever did those great *Mars Attacks* bubble gum cards.

And **Mark Wheatley** and **Marc Hempel.**

Thanks, guys. It was one hell of a trip.

— Mike Gold

Rick Obadiah, Publisher

Mike Gold, Managing Editor
Rick Oliver, Editorial Coordinator
Alex Wald,
Production Manager

Ralph C. Musicant,
Operations Director
Kathy Kotsivas,
Direct Sales Manager

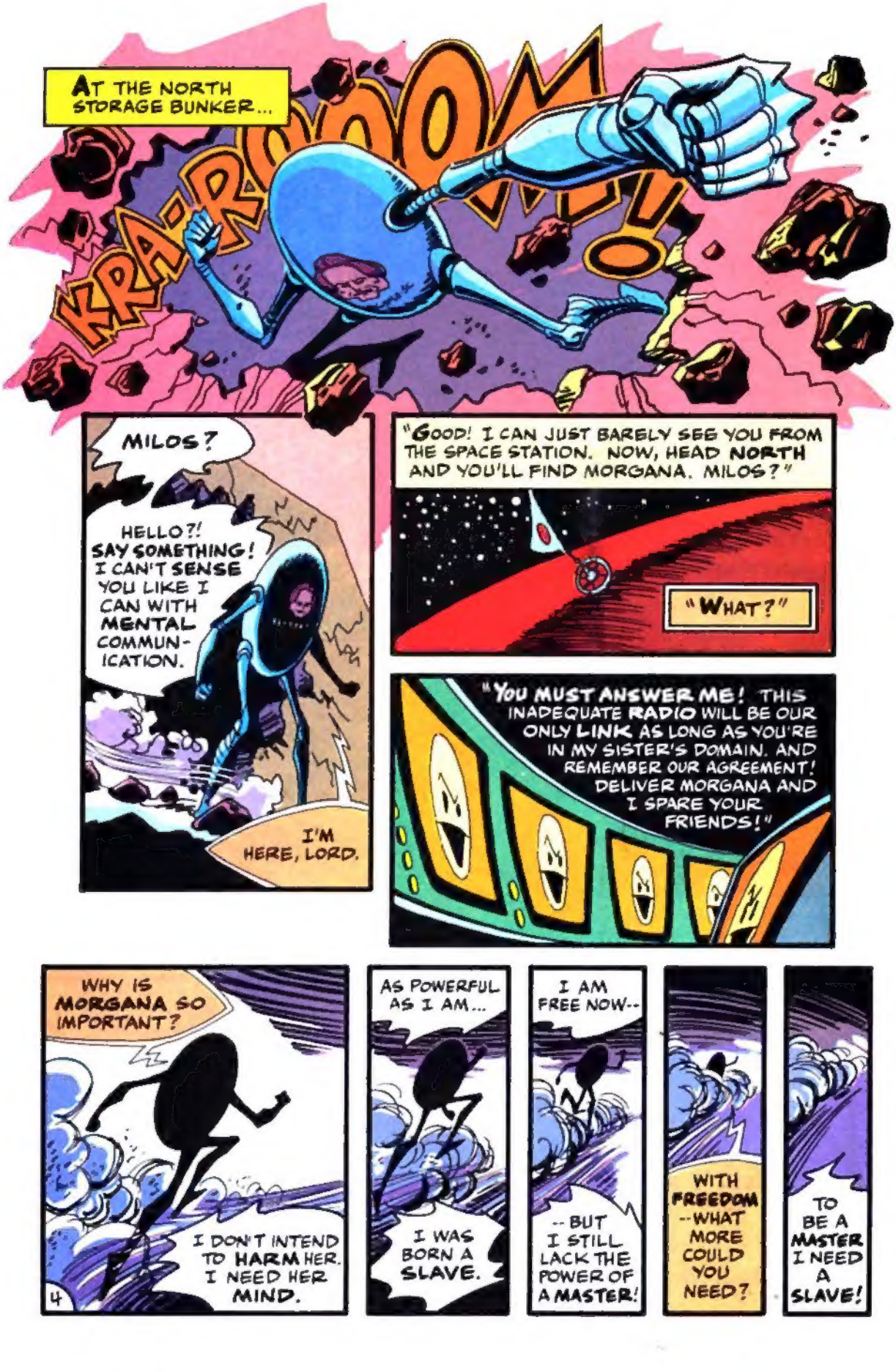
MARS ™, Vol. 1, No. 12, March 1985. Published by FIRST COMICS INC. Mike Gold, President, Rick Obadiah, Secretary; Kenneth F. Levin and Ralph C. Musicant, Directors. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60201. Published bi-monthly. Copyright © 1984 First Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. Price: $1.25 in the U.S. Subscription rates for twelve issues: $15.00 in the U.S., $17.00 in Canada, and $32.00 foreign rate. All payments must be in U.S. funds. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this publication are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, without satiric content are intended or should be inferred. Mars, Morgana Trace, Dynamo Joe, and all prominent characters featured in this issue are trademarks of First Comics, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A. Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at Evanston, Illinois 60204. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Mars, c/o First Comics, Inc., 1014 Davis St., Evanston, IL 60201

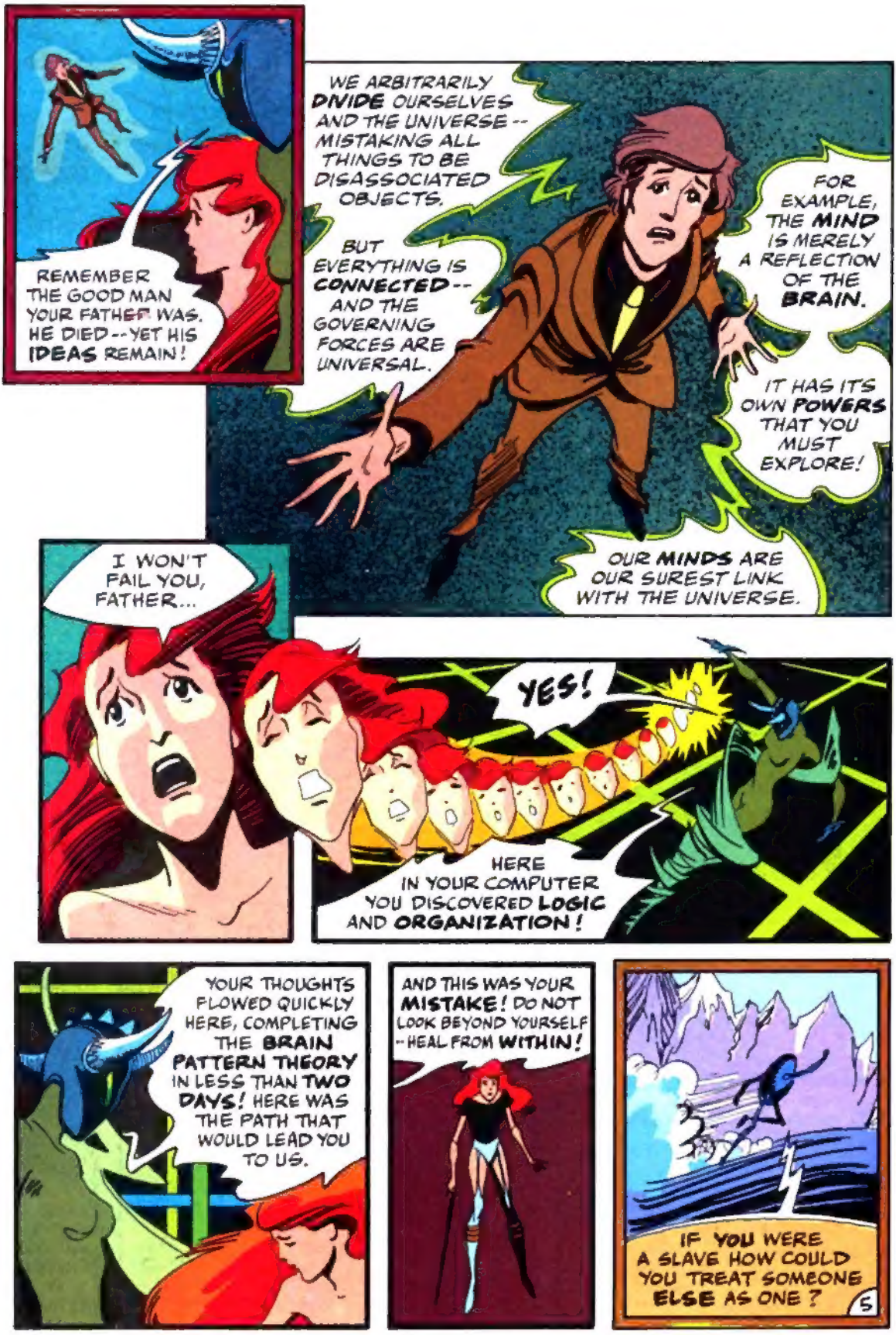
A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

MARC HEMPEL
MARK WHEATLEY
CIRCUIT DEATH
LETTERING & COLORING ASSISTED BY KATHRYN MAYER
EDITED BY MIKE GOLD
AAAAHH!
LEAVE US! I'LL ATTEND MORGANA!
AS YOU WISH, CHYIA.
IT'S BEEN THE WORK OF 10,000 YEARS TO BRING YOU THIS FAR...
1

... I CAN'T LET YOU THROW IT ALL AWAY NOW!
YOUR MIND IS SICK, DEAR FRIEND.
IN THE TIME LEFT WE MUST JOIN OUR MINDS.
I MUST HELP YOU HEAL.
REEXAMINE YOUR LIFE AND YOU WILL DISCOVER THAT POWER WHICH IS YOURS!
REMEMBER HOW YOUR FATHER LIVED...
... AND HOW HE DIED!
DADDY! NO!! MY LEGS!
GIMP! DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH!
AND REMEMBER ALL THE VOICES TELLING YOU--
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
YOU'LL NEVER WALK AGAIN!
I'LL WALK AGAIN! I KNOW I WILL!
YES! YOU CAN BE WHOLE!
YOU'LL HAVE NO FEELING!
NO FEELING...
NO FEELING!

UNNGH!
AH! HELP!!
CAL! IT'S ONE OF OUR SAFE-CASES!
BASH!
IT'S MORGANA!
MORGANA?
SHE SURE IS MESSED UP.
WELL, YOU DIDN'T HELP ANY...
MY NAME? TEEZY... I'M TEEZY... I'M LOOKING FOR MORGANA.
PARDON ME FOR TRYING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE!
MORGANA! IS THAT YOU IN THERE?
412-SC
3


AT THE NORTH STORAGE BUNKER...
KRA-ROOOOM!
MILOS?
HELLO?! SAY SOMETHING! I CAN'T SENSE YOU LIKE I CAN WITH MENTAL COMMUN-ICATION.
I'M HERE, LORD.
"GOOD! I CAN JUST BARELY SEE YOU FROM THE SPACE STATION. NOW, HEAD NORTH AND YOU'LL FIND MORGANA. MILOS?"
"WHAT?"
"YOU MUST ANSWER ME! THIS INADEQUATE RADIO WILL BE OUR ONLY LINK AS LONG AS YOU'RE IN MY SISTER'S DOMAIN. AND REMEMBER OUR AGREEMENT! DELIVER MORGANA AND I SPARE YOUR FRIENDS!"
WHY IS MORGANA SO IMPORTANT?
I DON'T INTEND TO HARM HER. I NEED HER MIND.
AS POWERFUL AS I AM...
I WAS BORN A SLAVE.
I AM FREE NOW--
-- BUT I STILL LACK THE POWER OF A MASTER!
WITH FREEDOM --WHAT MORE COULD YOU NEED?
TO BE A MASTER I NEED A SLAVE!
4


REMEMBER THE GOOD MAN YOUR FATHER WAS. HE DIED--YET HIS IDEAS REMAIN!
WE ARBITRARILY DIVIDE OURSELVES AND THE UNIVERSE--MISTAKING ALL THINGS TO BE DISASSOCIATED OBJECTS.
BUT EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED--AND THE GOVERNING FORCES ARE UNIVERSAL.
FOR EXAMPLE, THE MIND IS MERELY A REFLECTION OF THE BRAIN.
IT HAS ITS OWN POWERS THAT YOU MUST EXPLORE!
OUR MINDS ARE OUR SUREST LINK WITH THE UNIVERSE.
I WON'T FAIL YOU, FATHER...
YES!
HERE IN YOUR COMPUTER YOU DISCOVERED LOGIC AND ORGANIZATION!
YOUR THOUGHTS FLOWED QUICKLY HERE, COMPLETING THE BRAIN PATTERN THEORY IN LESS THAN TWO DAYS! HERE WAS THE PATH THAT WOULD LEAD YOU TO US.
AND THIS WAS YOUR MISTAKE! DO NOT LOOK BEYOND YOURSELF--HEAL FROM WITHIN!
IF YOU WERE A SLAVE HOW COULD YOU TREAT SOMEONE ELSE AS ONE?
5

YOU HAVE NO NEED TO KNOW...
YOU HAVE NO POWER OVER ANY OF US HERE IN YOUR SISTER'S TERRITORY!
IF I HELP YOU NOW, IT'LL BE BECAUSE YOU'VE CONVINCED ME TO!
WHAT?! YOU'LL REGRET THIS! ALRIGHT... THERE IS WAR HERE, MILOS. I AM AT WAR WITH MY BROTHERS AND SISTER. THIS CONFLICT BEGAN WHEN MAN, ON EARTH, WAS LITTLE MORE THAN AN ANIMAL. AND IT HAS BEEN ALMOST AS LONG SINCE I LEARNED I COULD NOT WIN. BUT I KNOW I SHOULD CONTROL THIS WORLD!
"I WAS PROGRAMMED TO SURVIVE AND GROW. I NEED MORGANA TO DO THAT! HER MIND WILL HELP ME GAIN CONTROL AND RID MYSELF OF THIS ANNOYING VEGETATION AND ALL THE BARRIERS BETWEEN THE SUN'S POWER AND MY SENSORS!"
LORD HELP ME... I'VE LONG SUSPECTED THAT YOU HAD DELUDED ME WITH FALSE IMAGES OF MESSIAHS... BUT HOW COULD I HAVE ALLOWED MYSELF TO BECOME THE PAWN OF A COMPUTER?!
MILOS! HELLO? DON'T CUT ME OFF! MILOS! DAMN YOU! I THOUGHT I COULD USE YOU!
BUT YOU'RE TOO DANGEROUS--TOO UNPREDICTABLE! I SHOULD'VE DEPENDED ON MY OWN POWERS AND CREATURES...
... AND STARTING NOW I WILL!
6

PRAISE THE TAMERS OF THE BEAST!
IT HAS TO BE MORGANA, RAY! NO OTHER MIND COULD INHABIT HER SAFECASE!
BUT SHE INSISTS SHE'S THIS-- "TEEZY!"
THEN SHE'S CRAZY. THAT'S GOT TO BE MORGANA!
GOD LONG AGO FORTOLD YOUR COMING-- BUT SHE NEVER TOLD US HOW MUCH HELP YOU WOULD BE TO US.
WE ARE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR STOPPING THE ATTACKS OF THE BEAST.
NEVER BEFORE HAD WE TO DEAL WITH A HOSTILE CREATURE. FOR GOD BIDS WE LIVE IN PEACE.
NOW YOUR GREAT DEEDS WILL JOIN THE OTHERS HERE IN THE HALL OF HISTORY!
PINE! JUST MAKE SURE THEY GET A GOOD LIKENESS!
HEY, CHIEF! CAN YOU EXPLAIN THESE PICTO-GRAPHS?

IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, THEN HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND WATCH THE LIVING STORY!
HELLO, FRIENDS -- YOU ARE SAFE. SOON YOU WILL FIND THE OBJECT OF YOUR JOURNEY -- BUT FIRST YOU MUST LEARN OF THE WAR YOU'VE BECOME A PART OF...
THAT'S FAWN'S VOICE!
THIS PLANET YOU CALL MARS IS A VAST LIBRARY. WHEN YOUR RACE WAS JUST BEGINNING ITS ADVENTURE, MY MASTERS WERE PART OF AN ANCIENT, STAR-SPANNING CULTURE. WHENEVER THEY DISCOVERED AN EMERGING INTELLIGENCE THEY LEFT A RECEPTACLE NEARBY OF ALL THEIR AMASSED KNOWLEDGE.
THERE IT WOULD AWAIT THE DAY WHEN IT WOULD AID A RACE OF EQUALS. MARS WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A WORLD-SPANNING COMPUTER. WHAT YOU ONCE THOUGHT WERE CANALS WERE ACTUALLY THE DARKER SHADES OF THE CIRCUITS -- THE PATTERNS MADE BY THE NETWORKS OF INFORMATION CARRIERS.
FIFTY ORBS ETCHED THIS GLOBE -- ONLY TWO YET REMAIN. THERE WERE NINE DIVISIONS OF THE COMPUTER. EACH SECTION HAD ITS OWN PURPOSE AND INFORMATION. MY PURPOSE WAS TO MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION AND BALANCE.
I FAILED.
MY BROTHER DRANG'S TERRITORY IS TO THE SOUTH. THERE HE ATTRACTED YOU TO SETTLE. HIS JOB WAS TO PROTECT THIS LIBRARY AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL.
HE CREATED THE PLACE YOU CALL MICROSCOPE CITY TO SERVE AS THE INTERFACE, BUT DRANG WAS CONVINCED THAT YOU THREATENED OUR SURVIVAL.
HE ATTACKED YOUR EARLIER MISSIONS, DELAYING CONTACT. IN TURN, YOUR TERRAFORMING ALMOST DESTROYED US. PLANTS AND ATMOSPHERE BLOCKED THE SUN'S POWER. ROOTS DESTROYED VITAL LINKAGES. AND RUNNING WATERS DESTROYED GREAT SECTIONS OF US.

FIRST NOTES

FAMILY ALBUM

It's been a while since we've done one of these. A lot has happened to, and with, the folks associated with First Comics.

Additions: We'd like to welcome **Laurel Fitch** and **Lynn Danford** to our staff, both having joined us last (gasp) spring. Lynn's our bookkeeper — it's complicated, keeping books on our books — and Laurel has joined our administrative staff. More recently, Laurel also has taken on an important editorial function — that of proofreader.

Subtractions: After nearly three years, **Joe Station** has left our staff, to return to the life of a full-time freelancer. He'll be continuing on with **E-Man** and **The P.I.'s**, and he'll be returning to DC's *Green Lantern*.

Joe's been responsible for developing and defining the look of First Comics — a tough, tough job. His work went beyond cover and advertising formats and logos, and extended to our approach to coloring and lettering. It is safe to say that, without Joe, First Comics would look completely different. Thanks, J.T.S. We'll miss you.

Promotions: We've got three of them ... **Rick Oliver** has been promoted to the new position of editorial coordinator, although he will continue to edit several books in our line. Rick's been the man most responsible — from an editorial perspective — for First Comics' much-valued on-time performance.

Alex Wald has been promoted to production manager, having full responsibility for all aspects of printing, including color separations. It's tricky work, printing comics ... particularly with the finer color screens and the white paper. Alex has got to work with about a zillion people on the outside, and at least two people (in addition to Rick Oliver and myself) in editorial: First's two production artists.

You know of one of these guys, **Doug Rice** — creator/artist of **Dynamo Joe**. You probably don't know the other one, who may not even be a "guy." We're hiring a new production artist and, no, don't call us — by the time you read this, the job was filled about two months ago.

Alex and Rick were promoted last summer. **Kathy Kotsilves** was promoted last spring (hey, I said it was a long time between these "Family Albums"). Kathy is now First's Sales Manager, responsible for dealing with our shippers, distributors and retailers, getting our comics out to you each week. Well, each week starting next month ... but more on that in a bit.

Shuffling: A few talent changes. Starting this month, **Hilary Barta** will move up from doing finishes on **Starslayer** to doing full pencils, and **Mark Nelson** will be inking the series. **Timothy Truman**, who up to now had been laying out the book, has moved on to two — count 'em two — top secret projects.

And, yes, **Peter Gillis, Tom Sutton** and **Don Lomax** will be doing a full-length **Black Flame** story before you know it.

Back on the **E-Man** front, we're extremely happy to announce a new writer will be taking over the feature with #24 (out the month following the conclusion to **The P.I.'s** mini-series). Not that Joe wasn't doing a fantastic job — he certainly was.

But you can hardly stand in the way when the co-creator and original writer is available to return to the feature. Yep, in just a few short months, **Nicola Cuti** will be back scripting **E-Man**!

Returning: Two extremely popular titles will be returning to the comics racks, now under the First Comics banner, literally by popular demand. **Nexus** will be out in just a couple of weeks, and **The Badger** will join us just after the first of the year.

We're just about keeping everything the same in these two titles. The same creative teams (**Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude** as writer and penciller, respectively, on **Nexus**; and Baron, **Bill Reinhold** and **Jeff Dee** as writer, penciller and inker on **The Badger**), the same Baxter paper, enhanced color on both books ... there's no reason to mess with success.

As for the changes. We're starting **Nexus** off as a *monthly*, a promotion from its previous bi-monthly status. **The Badger** will begin as a bi-monthly, but should achieve monthly status after about three or four issues, when we'll be sufficiently ahead of schedule for such a move.

We'll also be standardizing each book at a full 28 pages of story. Previously, the story page-count generally has wavered around 24 pages. Rick Oliver will be editing **Nexus**; I'll be editing **The Badger**. And, yes, we'll be starting off with the **Richard Bruning**-edited material you've seen advertised.

To The Void: Go **Mars** and **Warp**. I'm sorry to say that, but with **Nexus, The Badger** and our other new projects, we do not want to stretch ourselves too thin. It's tough to avoid, but we'll continue our pattern of slow growth, taking things one step at a time.

From all appearances thus far, **Dynamo Joe** will play a big part in that growth pattern.

First Every Week: And with the addition of **Nexus** and **The Badger**, there will be a First Comics title or two released each of the four standard ship weeks of the month (ship weeks, for reasons that are both complicated and boring, begin on Tuesdays; some months actually have five Tuesdays in them). **Nexus** and **The Badger** will ship the first week, **Grimjack** and **E-Man** the second, **American Flagg!** and **Starslayer** the third, and **Jon Sable, Freelance** the fourth.

Holidays: And, as we start our third full year of publishing, it has come time once again to wish you and your family the happiest of Thanksgivings, the cheeriest of Chanukahs, and the merriest of Christmases. To your family, from the entire First family.

— Mike Gold

FIRST in NOVEMBER!

American Flagg! #18 — The conclusion to both "Northern Lights — Double Cross!" and to the American Flagg! Decision!

Grimjack #8 — Elections, Cynosure-style! And you won't believe who's campaign is about to turn ... terminal!

Jon Sable, Freelance #22: The beginning of two **Mike Grell** three-parters. "The Contract" and "The Hunt!"

Mars #12: The long-awaited conclusion to the Mars saga, and the fiery finale to the first **Dynamo Joe** saga!

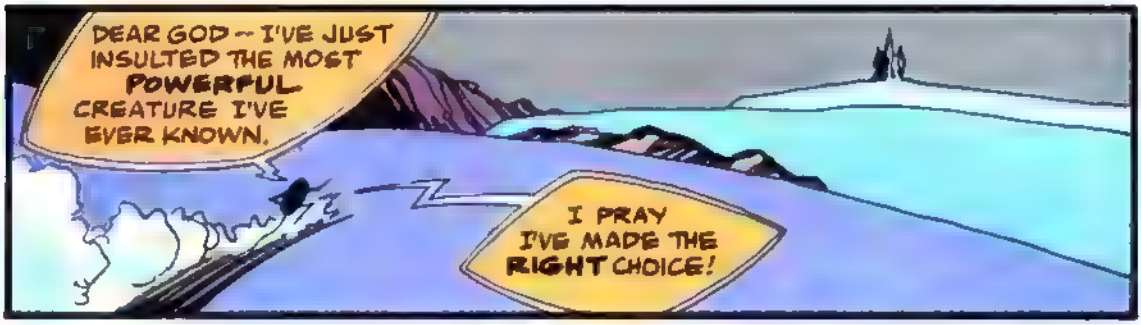
The P.I.'s #2 (mini-series): Ms. Tree meets Mike Mauser in "All in Color for a Crime," and **Mike Grell's** tribute to Mickey Spillane!

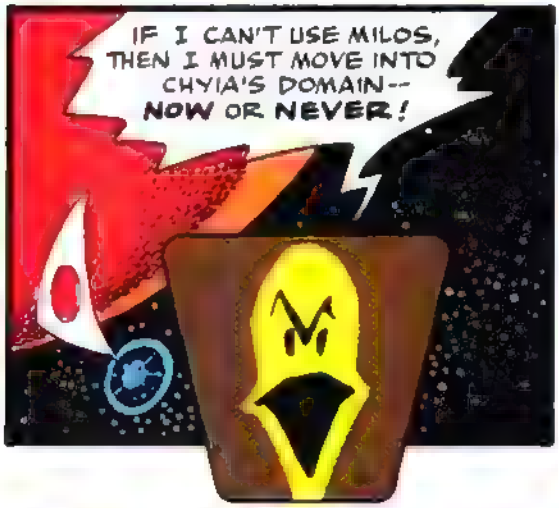
Starslayer #26: Revealed — the deadly secret of Kalibos, and Torin's choice between life and death!

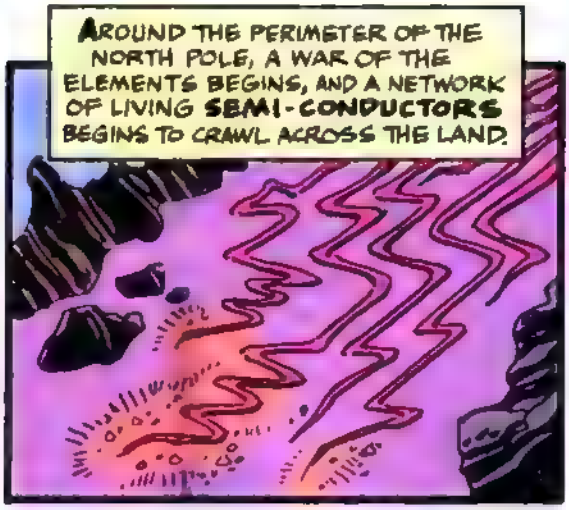
NOW, YOUR LIBRARY IS ALL BUT USELESS TO YOU-- IT EVEN ATTACKS YOU. I APOLOGISE -- AND I NEED YOUR HELP. WITH IT WE MAY ALL SURVIVE.
WHAT CAN WE DO?
WOOSH!
CALL HER BACK TO THE WAKING WORLD AND HELP HER BELIEVE IN HERSELF!
POOR LITTLE CRIPPLED GIRL-- SO PRETTY-- COULD'VE GONE SO FAR -- BUT WITHOUT HER LEGS...
NO! I'VE LEARNED!
I CAN THINK OF WAYS TO WALK!
I'M BETTER THAN ABLEBODIED PEOPLE 'CAUSE I'VE HAD TO THINK! I HAVE TO USE MY HEAD TO DO THE SIMPLEST THINGS ... AND I DO THEM BETTER!
HER LIFE LOOKED SO GOOD FROM THE OUTSIDE.
IS THAT REALLY HER?
HOW CAN WE HEAR HER THOUGHTS?
THAT DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT DOES IS THAT SHE PLACED HER FAITH IN HER DEVICES.
SHE FEELS LOST WITHOUT HER LEG STIMULATORS. I'VE TRIED TO REACH HER-- PERHAPS YOU CAN SUCCEED WHERE I'VE FAILED.
OH BABY, I NEVER KNEW YOU HURT SO. I'LL CARE FOR YOU, I WILL. PLEASE COME BACK...
9

=UNGH!=
GET OUT OF THE WAY!
SLAP!
SLAP!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
I'M TRYING TO GET THROUGH TO HER! SHE'S GOT ENOUGH PITY FOR HERSELF--YOU'RE NOT HELPING BY GIVING HER MORE!
=UNGH...= ARE YOU TWO FIGHTING OVER ME?
TEEZY!!
OH MORGANA! I'VE MISSED YOU! I NEED YOU!
THERE IS LITTLE TIME AND MUCH TO DO. MORGANA-- WILL YOU HELP ME? CAN YOU WALK?
WALK? NO! AND IF I CAN'T DO THAT FOR MYSELF HOW CAN I HELP YOU? I CAN'T FIND THIS POWER YOU SAY I HAVE.
10

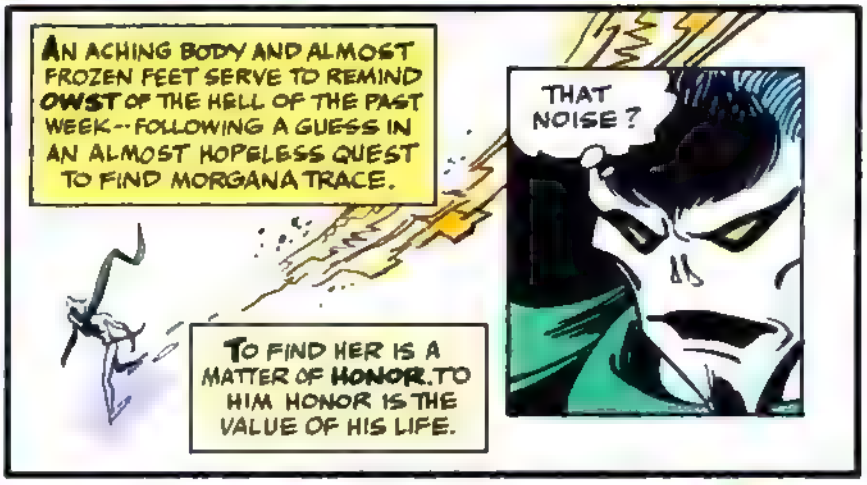
YOU CAN HELP ME! BELIEVE IT! JUST TRY! ALL OF MARS DEPENDS ON YOU!
WHAT I CAN DO-- I WILL DO!
THIS CAP IS A LIVING PART OF ME. THROUGH IT YOU WILL BE A PART OF ME AS WELL.
THINK OF ME AS A COMPUTER WITH CERTAIN PREDICTABLE RESPONSES TO ANY PROBLEM.
I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PROTECT YOU FROM MY BROTHER'S ATTACKS BECAUSE HE AND I ARE PERFECTLY MATCHED.
WE CANNOT INVADE ONE ANOTHER.
WE THINK ALIKE AND ARE AT A STALEMATE. WE NEED YOUR HUMAN INITIATIVE. THE LIFE YOU BROUGHT TO THIS WORLD ALLOWED US TO CREATE OUR OWN INTELLIGENT CREATURES --BUT WE ONLY MAKE LESSER FORMS OF OURSELVES.
I NEED YOU TO HELP ME OUT-THINK DRANG!
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT TELEPATHY? MY RESEARCH CONVINCED ME IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
TRUE--BUT YOU HAVE A LOGICALLY ORDERED MIND-- ONE THAT I CAN ALTER MY PATTERNS TO MATCH.
OKAY--YOU'LL GET HUMAN INITIATIVE -- BUT I CAN'T PROMISE THAT YOU WON'T GET HUMAN FAILINGS AS WELL.
11

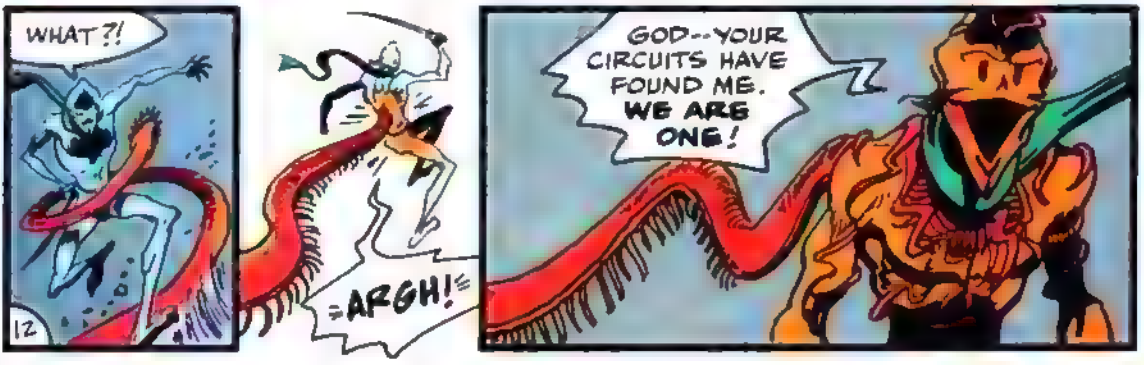

DEAR GOD -- I'VE JUST INSULTED THE MOST POWERFUL CREATURE I'VE EVER KNOWN.
I PRAY I'VE MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE!


IF I CAN'T USE MILOS, THEN I MUST MOVE INTO CHYIA'S DOMAIN-- NOW OR NEVER!


AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THE NORTH POLE, A WAR OF THE ELEMENTS BEGINS, AND A NETWORK OF LIVING SEMI-CONDUCTORS BEGINS TO CRAWL ACROSS THE LAND.

BUT THEN DRANG'S CIRCUITS MEET CHYIA'S -- AND EACH IS BLOCKED!


AN ACHING BODY AND ALMOST FROZEN FEET SERVE TO REMIND OWST OF THE HELL OF THE PAST WEEK -- FOLLOWING A GUESS IN AN ALMOST HOPELESS QUEST TO FIND MORGANA TRACE.
THAT NOISE?
TO FIND HER IS A MATTER OF HONOR. TO HIM HONOR IS THE VALUE OF HIS LIFE.


WHAT?!
ARGH!
GOD -- YOUR CIRCUITS HAVE FOUND ME. WE ARE ONE!
12

OWST KNOWS HIS GOAL...
...BECAUSE NOW HE IS DRANG.
UNNOTICED BY CHYIA'S DISTRACTED CIRCUITS, HE SPEEDS TOWARD THE ICE PALACE.
WE ARE ONE!
WE HAVE THE POWER!
WE WILL INVADE DRANG!
THE WALL OF CIRCUITRY ABSORBS THEIR ENERGY, AND THEY ARE GONE...
HISSSSSSS!
THANK GOD! I'VE FOUND YOU!
MILOS?
MILOS!
CLANG!

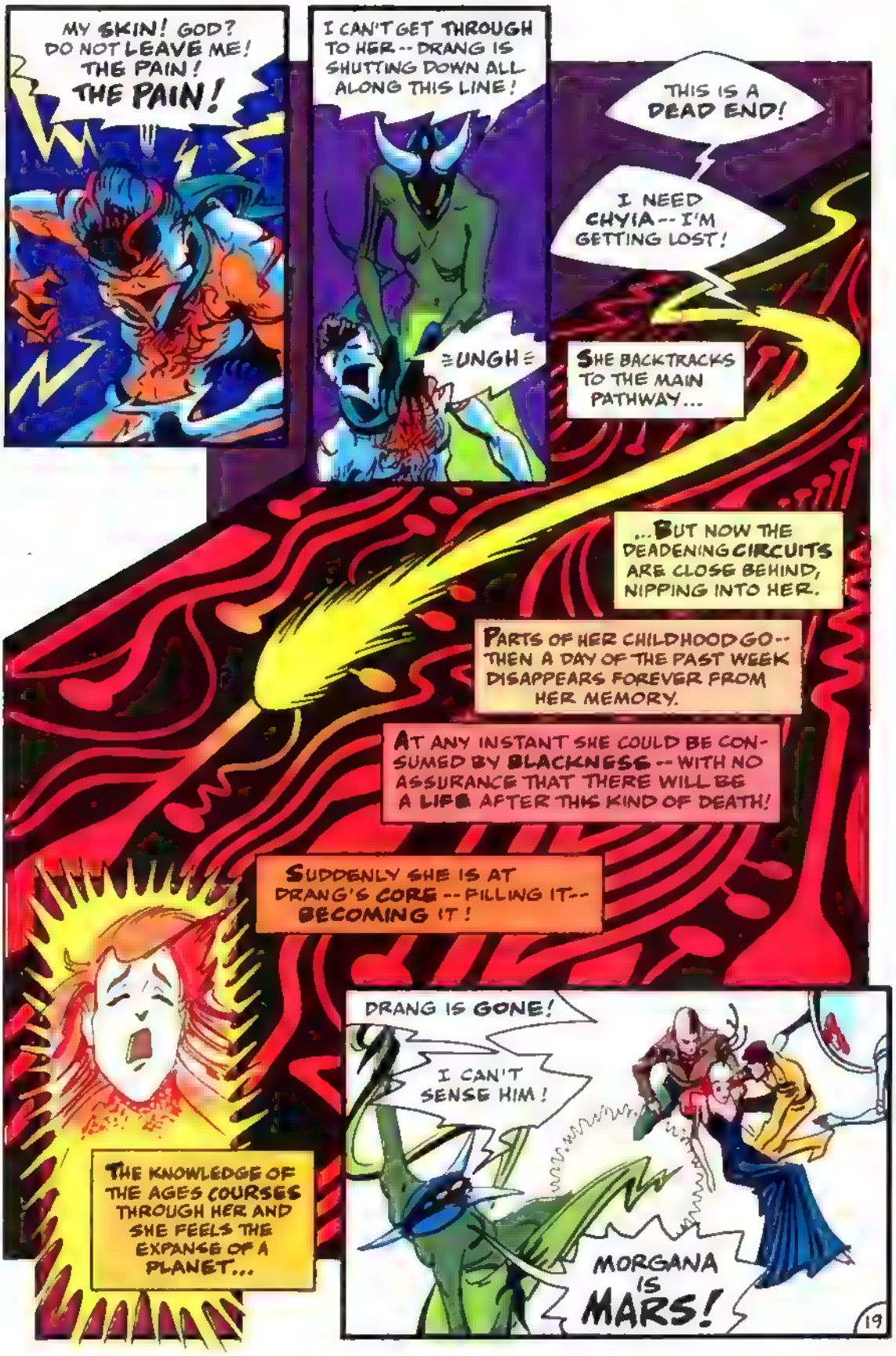
MORGANA/CHYIA RACE THROUGH THE MARTIAN CIRCUITRY.
FOLLOW MY LEAD, MORGANA -- BUT WATCH FOR ANY PATH I MIGHT MISS!
IT'S LIKE RACING THROUGH A MAZE!
YES!
BUT A DEADLY ONE! DRANG IS ATTACKING AT THE EDGE OF MY TERRITORY -- HE MUST KNOW THAT I HAVE YOU!
BACK!
WHY?
"DRANG HAS SENSED US -- HE'S SHUTTING DOWN THESE CIRCUITS! IF WE'RE CAUGHT IN A DEAD CIRCUIT WE'LL CEASE TO EXIST!"
WITH THE CIRCUITS DYING IN HOT PURSUIT, THE ENERGY THAT IS MORGANA/CHYIA RACES FOR A NEW ENTRANCE TO DRANG'S TERRITORY.
BRANG!
WANG!
TELL HER TO STOP! I MEAN NO HARM!
14

YOU MADE ME FALL! AND I WAS SO SCARED AND HURT! I HATE YOU!
TEEZY, NO! STOP!
LET HIM TALK. WE NEED HIS HELP-- IF HE'LL GIVE IT.
HE'LL HELP NO ONE!
ZZZRAK!
I AM COME, MILOS!
I AM COME!
IN JUST MINUTES, MORGANA! CHYIA HAVE CIRCLED THE POLE -- BUT THEY HAVE FAILED TO INVADE DRANG.
AND THEY HAVE INADVERTANTLY OPENED THE DOOR FOR DRANG'S RETALIATION.
THEY RACE THROUGH CHYIA'S LAND WITH DEATH A CLOSE SECOND.
POWER, MORGANA!
GIVE ME POWER! HURRY!
15

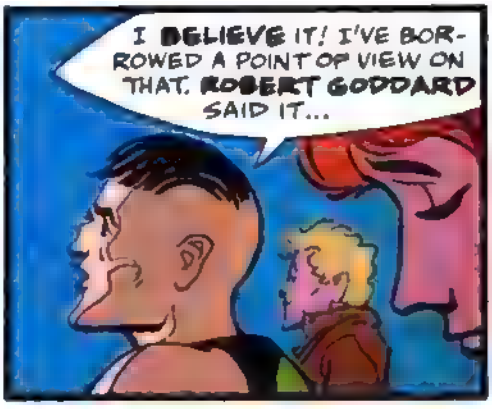
I'M JUST NOT READY FOR THIS... IT'S ALL SO STRANGE...
HOW COULD I HAVE SO MISJUDGED YOU?
IN DESPERATION, CHYLA EXPENDS PRECIOUS ENERGY TO EMPOWER CIRCUITRY IN ORDER TO DELAY DRANG.
BUT SHE KNOWS IT IS TOO LATE.
GASP!
TEEZY! MILOS! DON'T HOLD BACK BECAUSE OF US! ATTACK HIM OR WE'VE HAD IT!
FEEL THE POWER OF A PLANET!
YOUR STRATEGY IS WASTED -- I HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN ANY OF YOU!
OAI
STAY...
...AWAY!
WAK!
RIZZLK!
ARRRGH!
16

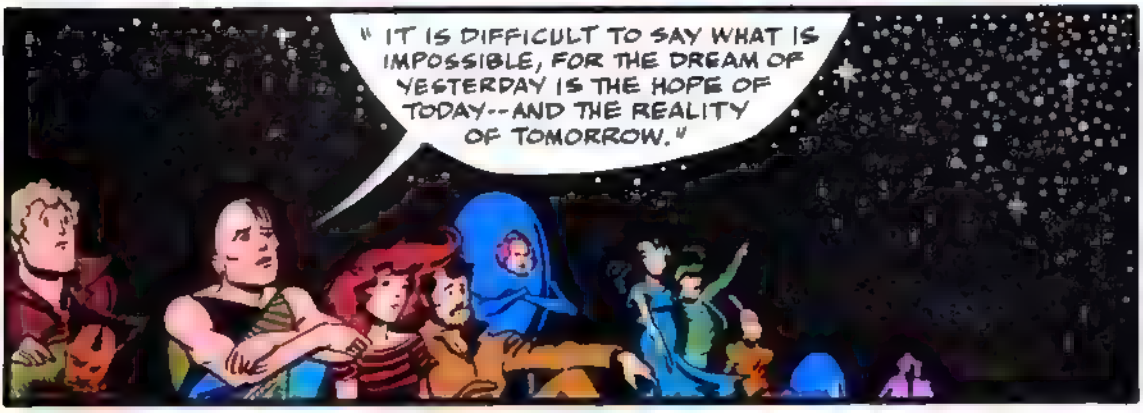
UNGH... THERE IS SO LITTLE OF ME LEFT...
NO! HER MIND! I WOULDN'T WANT HER IF HER MIND HADN'T RETURNED!
SNAP!
SHE'S WEAK--BUT SHE'LL SERVE ME ALL THE BETTER FOR THAT!
STOP! I'M QUITE WILLING TO LOSE HER!
I HAVE MOST OF CHYIA'S TERRITORY-- SOON I WILL BE ALL OF MARS!
MORGANA IS A LUXURY...
OH, LORD GOD PROTECT ME -- WHAT HAVE I DONE?
WE CAN'T LET THIS HAPPEN -- YOU'VE GOT TO STOP HIM -- MORGANA -- YOU CAN --
HOW? WHAT POWER COULD OVERCOME...? I... I JUST WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE!
HA! IT'S SO PERFECT!
MORGANA?
THE "BOTTOM LINE", MORGANA! REMEMBER THE "BOTTOM LINE!" IF THIS HAPPENS ...THEN YOU ALLOWED IT!
OR DON'T YOU BELIEVE WHAT YOU TELL OTHER PEOPLE?
17

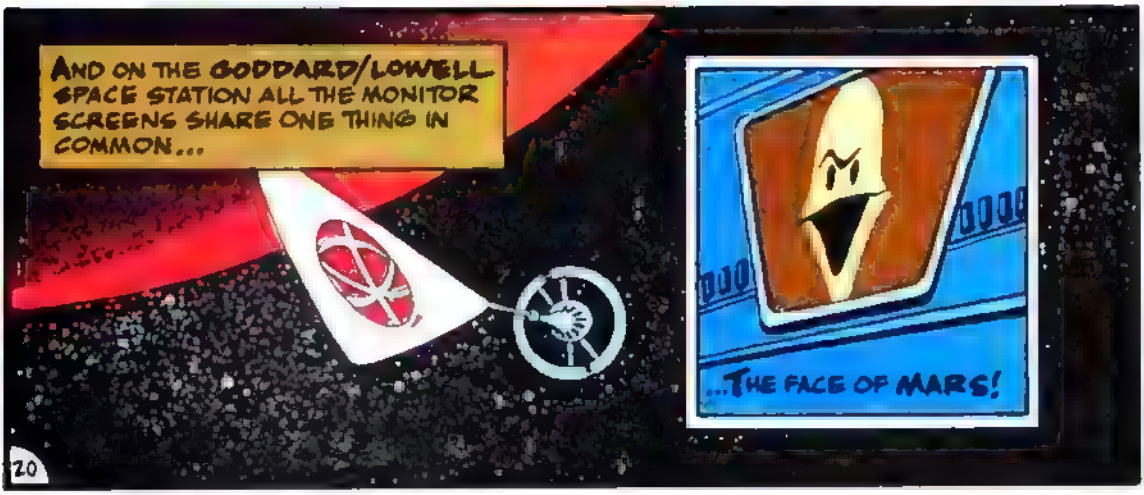
WHAT CAN I DO...?
CALL ME MARS, SISTER!
MARS...WE WERE MADE TO SERVE THESE PEOPLE--CAN'T YOU SEE THAT SURVIVING AT THEIR EXPENSE IS WRONG?
DRANG..
THEY NEVER WORRIED ABOUT OUR SURVIVAL!
THEY NEVER KNEW WE EXISTED--
OH NO! I SEE YOUR SCHEME!
YOU'LL NEVER TOUCH MY CIRCUITRY AGAIN! SOON YOU WILL FADE AWAY FOREVER!
TOUCH?
SNICT!
NOOOO!
I'LL STOP YOU, YET!
BUT MORGANA'S ENERGY IS ALREADY RACING THROUGH MARS' UMBILICAL--WITH CIRCUITS RAPIDLY DYING BEHIND HER!

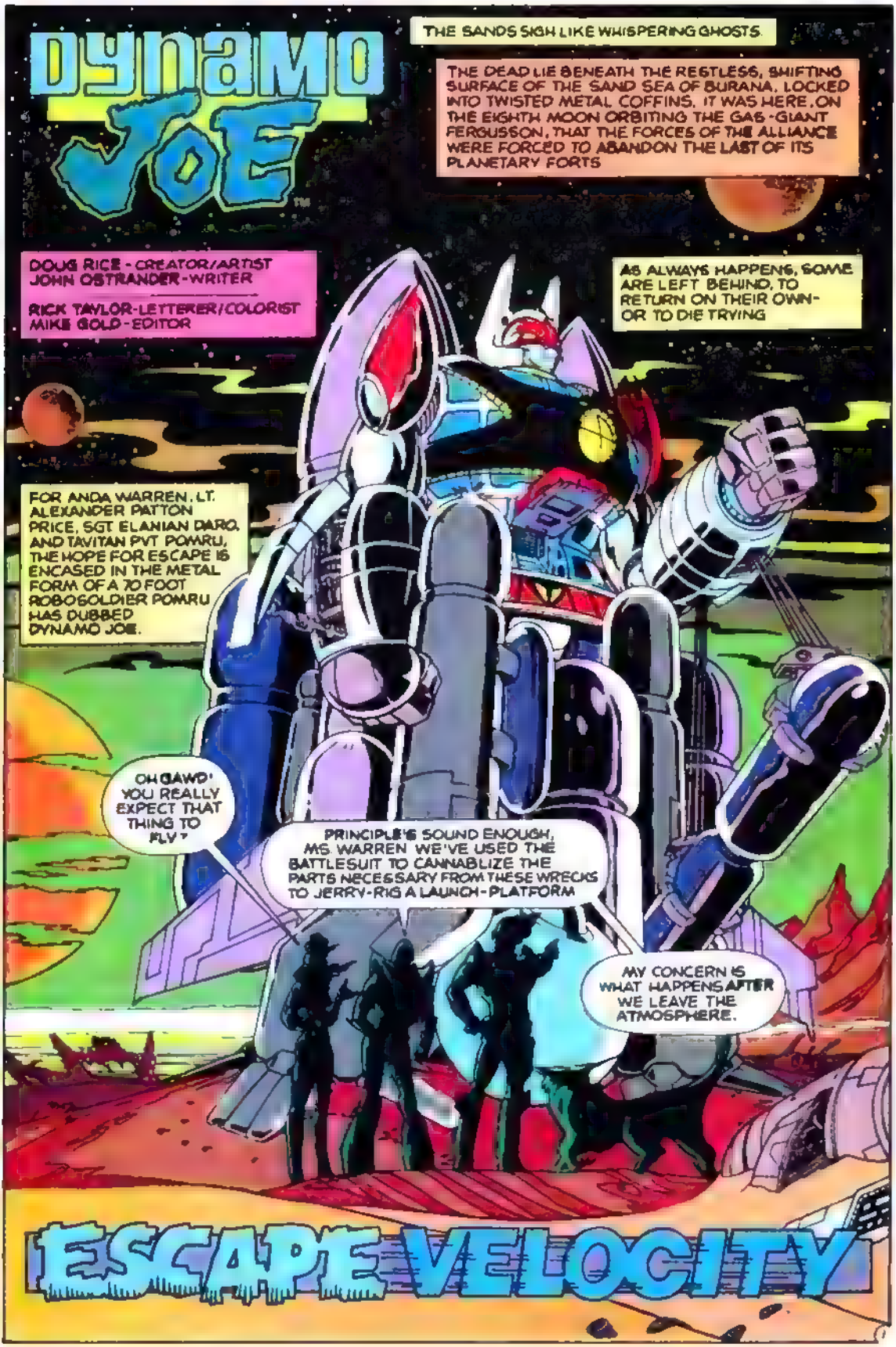

MY SKIN! GOD? DO NOT LEAVE ME! THE PAIN! THE PAIN!
I CAN'T GET THROUGH TO HER -- DRANG IS SHUTTING DOWN ALL ALONG THIS LINE!
=UNGH=
THIS IS A DEAD END!
I NEED CHYIA -- I'M GETTING LOST!
SHE BACKTRACKS TO THE MAIN PATHWAY...
...BUT NOW THE DEADENING CIRCUITS ARE CLOSE BEHIND, NIPPING INTO HER.
PARTS OF HER CHILDHOOD GO -- THEN A DAY OF THE PAST WEEK DISAPPEARS FOREVER FROM HER MEMORY.
AT ANY INSTANT SHE COULD BE CONSUMED BY BLACKNESS -- WITH NO ASSURANCE THAT THERE WILL BE A LIFE AFTER THIS KIND OF DEATH!
SUDDENLY SHE IS AT DRANG'S CORE -- FILLING IT -- BECOMING IT!
THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE AGES COURSES THROUGH HER AND SHE FEELS THE EXPANSE OF A PLANET...
DRANG IS GONE!
I CAN'T SENSE HIM!
MORGANA IS MARS!
19

WEEKS HAVE PASSED. MUCH HAS CHANGED. CHYIA HAS REPLACED MORGANA, BEGINNING A HEALING PROCESS OF MARS. AND THE EARTHMEN ON MARS HAVE, AT LAST, A NEW HOME!

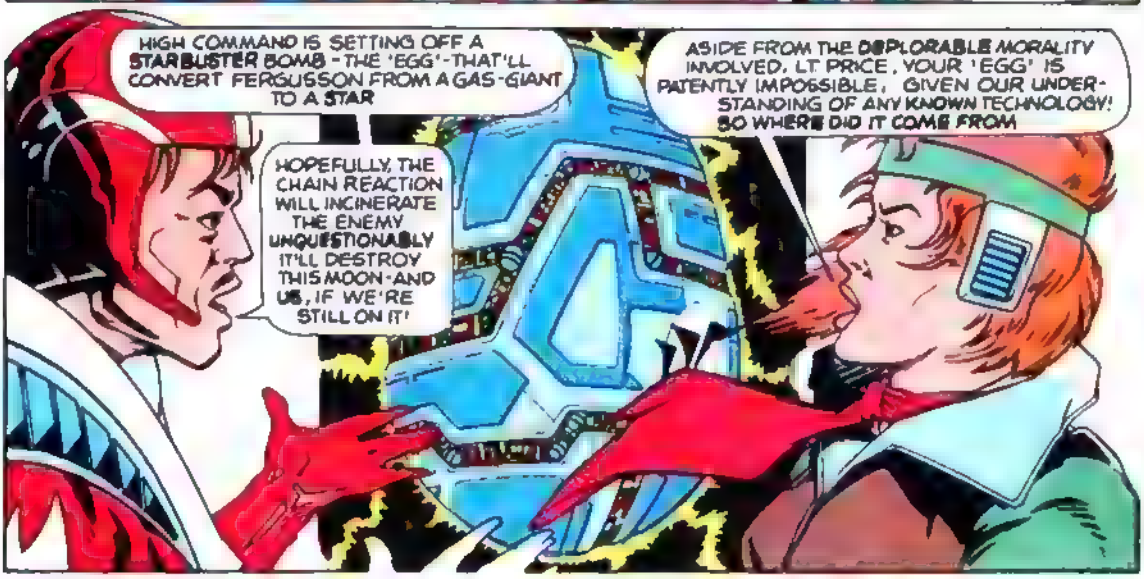


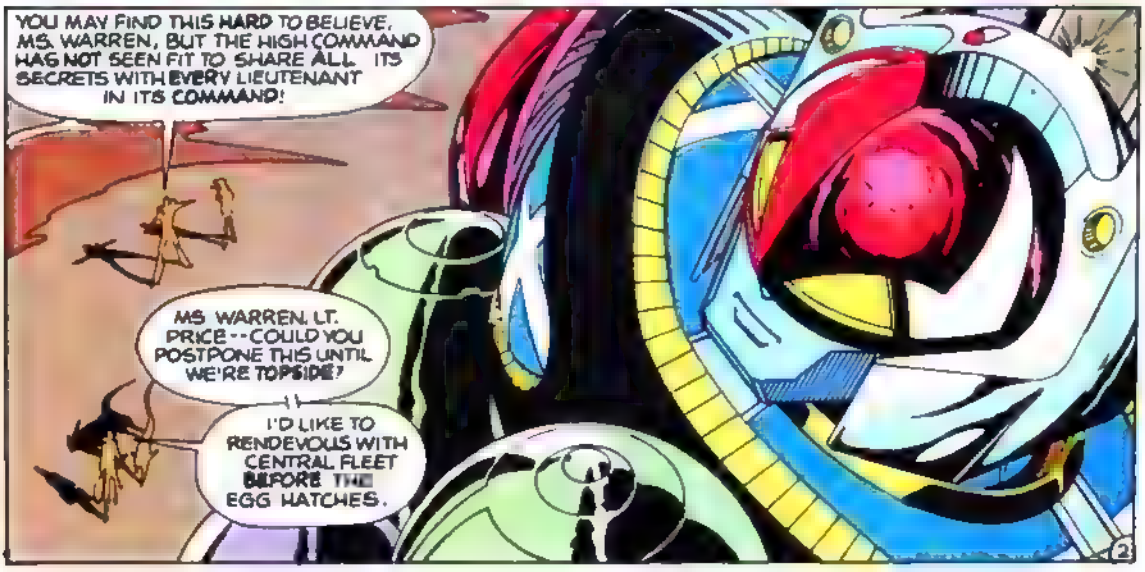


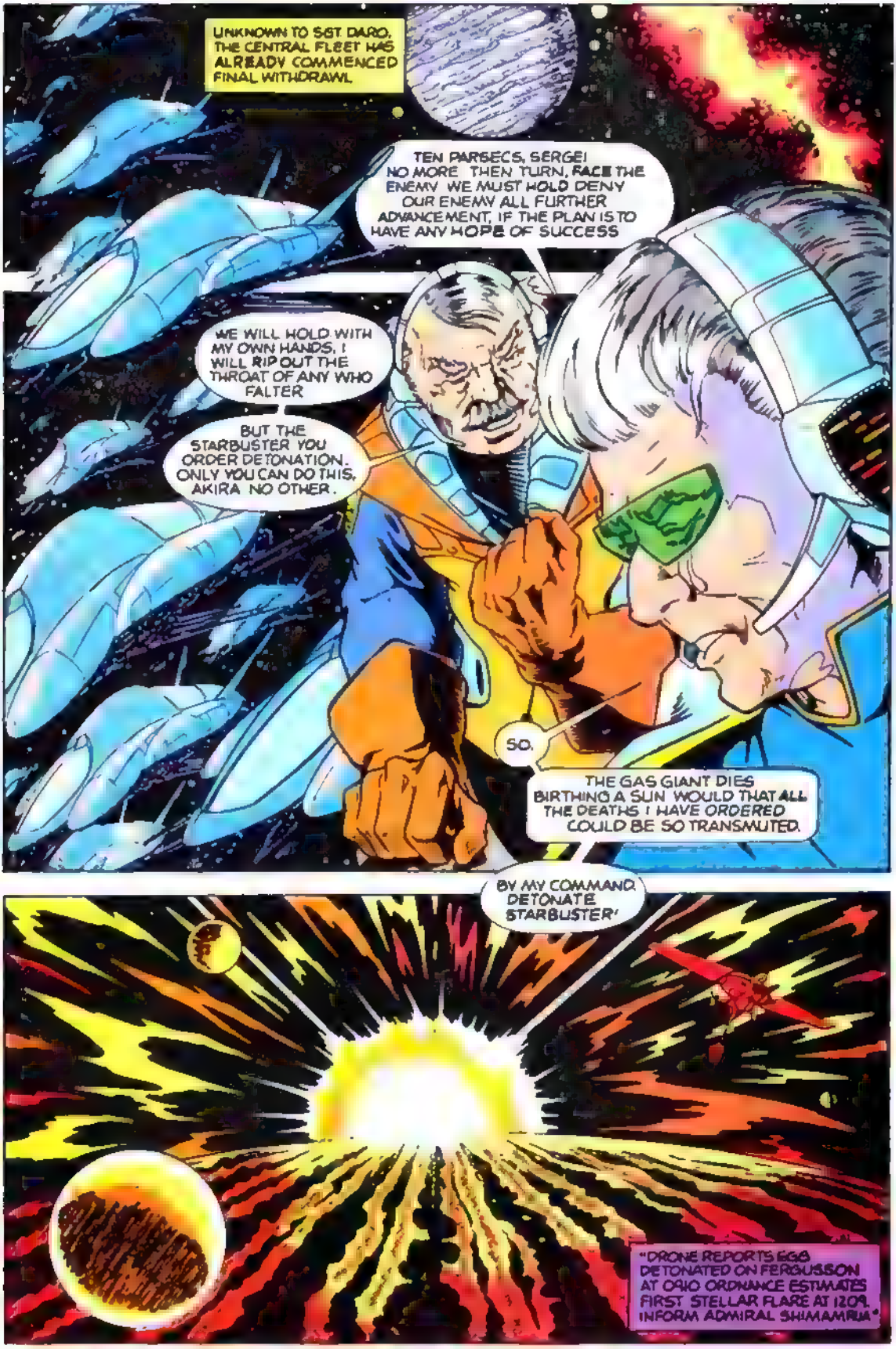



DYNAMO JOE
THE SANDS SIGH LIKE WHISPERING GHOSTS.
THE DEAD LIE BENEATH THE RESTLESS, SHIFTING SURFACE OF THE SAND SEA OF BURANA, LOCKED INTO TWISTED METAL COFFINS. IT WAS HERE, ON THE EIGHTH MOON ORBITING THE GAS-GIANT FERGUSSON, THAT THE FORCES OF THE ALLIANCE WERE FORCED TO ABANDON THE LAST OF ITS PLANETARY FORTS
DOUG RICE - CREATOR/ARTIST
JOHN OSTRANDER - WRITER
RICK TAYLOR - LETTERER/COLORIST
MIKE GOLD - EDITOR
AS ALWAYS HAPPENS, SOME ARE LEFT BEHIND, TO RETURN ON THEIR OWN - OR TO DIE TRYING
FOR ANDA WARREN, LT. ALEXANDER PATTON PRICE, SGT ELANIAN DARO, AND TAVITAN PVT POMRU, THE HOPE FOR ESCAPE IS ENCASED IN THE METAL FORM OF A 70 FOOT ROBOSOLDIER POMRU HAS DUBBED DYNAMO JOE.
OH GAWD! YOU REALLY EXPECT THAT THING TO FLY?
PRINCIPLE'S SOUND ENOUGH, MS. WARREN. WE'VE USED THE BATTLESUIT TO CANNABLIZE THE PARTS NECESSARY FROM THESE WRECKS TO JERRY-RIG A LAUNCH-PLATFORM
MY CONCERN IS WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE LEAVE THE ATMOSPHERE.
ESCAPE VELOCITY

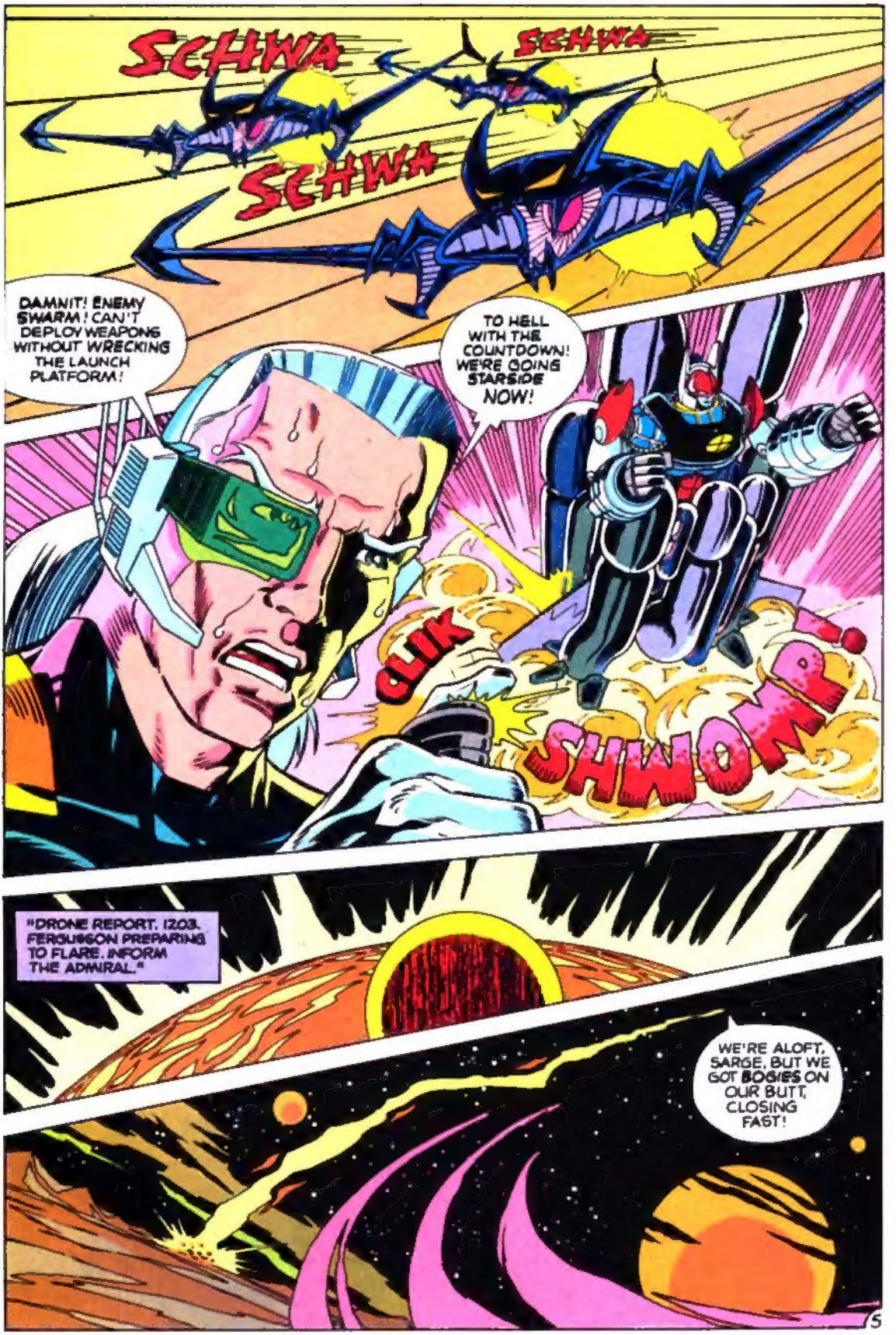
THE SUIT'S DESIGNED TO OPERATE IN A VARIETY OF TERRAINS, LIEUTENANT -- INCLUDING DEEP SPACE.
IT SEEMS OBVIOUS TO ME WE SHOULD SHOOT UP A FLARE OR SOMETHING AND WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO COME AND GET US
FIRST, WE HAVE TO GET OFF PLANET
NOT THAT ANYONE ASKED ME, OF COURSE.
YEAH! 'TIL THEN, WE'RE SITTING CHICKENS!
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MS. WARREN, NO ONE'S GOING TO COME ANYWHERE NEAR HERE


HIGH COMMAND IS SETTING OFF A STARBUSTER BOMB - THE 'EGG' - THAT'LL CONVERT FERGUSSON FROM A GAS-GIANT TO A STAR
ASIDE FROM THE DEPLORABLE MORALITY INVOLVED, LT. PRICE, YOUR 'EGG' IS PATENTLY IMPOSSIBLE, GIVEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ANY KNOWN TECHNOLOGY! SO WHERE DID IT COME FROM
HOPEFULLY, THE CHAIN REACTION WILL INCINERATE THE ENEMY UNQUESTIONABLY IT'LL DESTROY THIS MOON - AND US, IF WE'RE STILL ON IT!

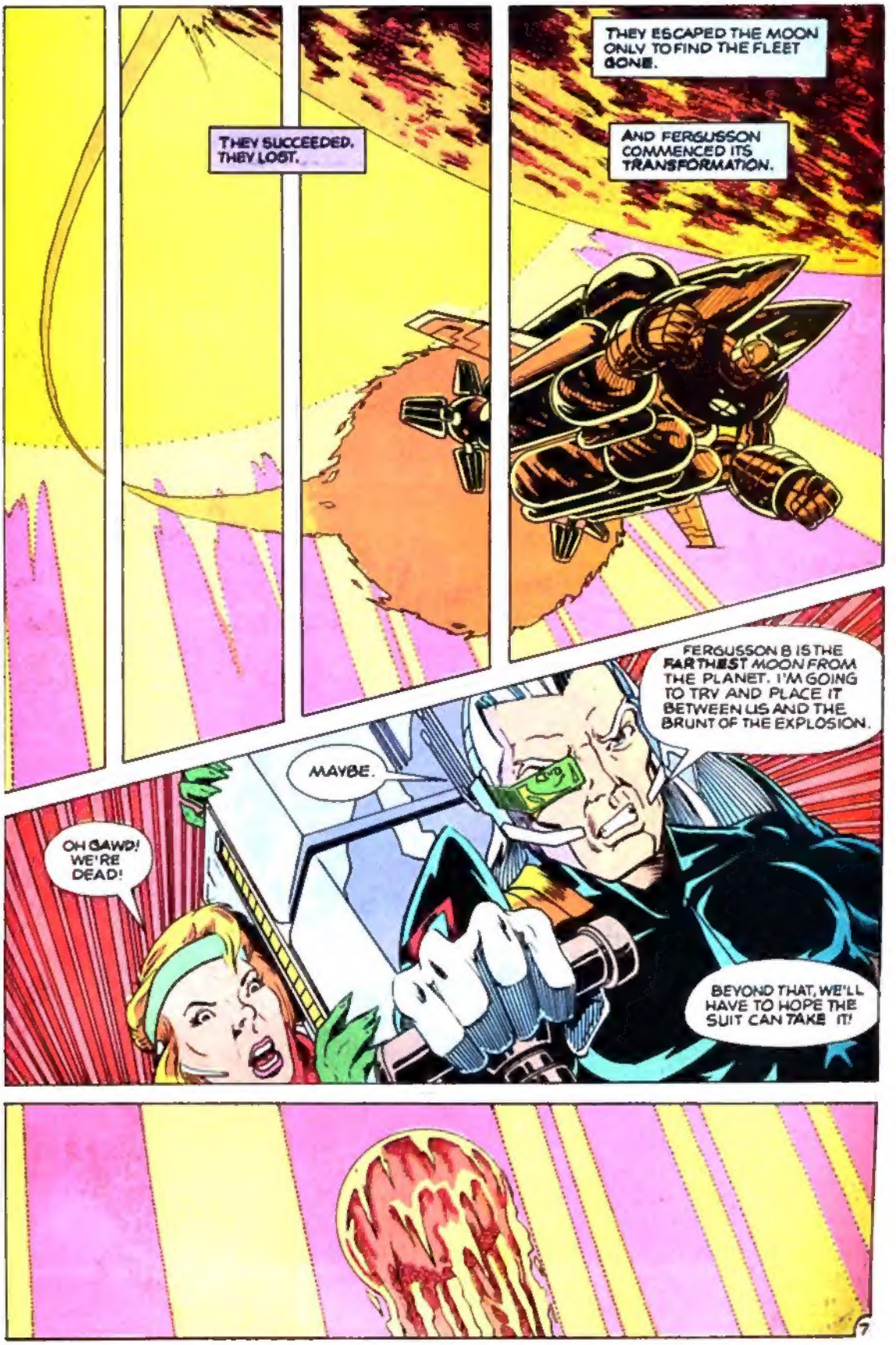

YOU MAY FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE, MS. WARREN, BUT THE HIGH COMMAND HAS NOT SEEN FIT TO SHARE ALL ITS SECRETS WITH EVERY LIEUTENANT IN ITS COMMAND!
MS. WARREN, LT. PRICE -- COULD YOU POSTPONE THIS UNTIL WE'RE TOPSIDE?
I'D LIKE TO RENDEVOUS WITH CENTRAL FLEET BEFORE THE EGG HATCHES.


UNKNOWN TO SGT DARO, THE CENTRAL FLEET HAS ALREADY COMMENCED FINAL WITHDRAWL
TEN PARSECS, SERGE! NO MORE THEN TURN, FACE THE ENEMY WE MUST HOLD DENY OUR ENEMY ALL FURTHER ADVANCEMENT, IF THE PLAN IS TO HAVE ANY HOPE OF SUCCESS
WE WILL HOLD WITH MY OWN HANDS, I WILL RIP OUT THE THROAT OF ANY WHO FALTER
BUT THE STARBUSTER YOU ORDER DETONATION. ONLY YOU CAN DO THIS, AKIRA NO OTHER.
SO.
THE GAS GIANT DIES BIRTHING A SUN WOULD THAT ALL THE DEATHS I HAVE ORDERED COULD BE SO TRANSMUTED.
BY MY COMMAND. DETONATE STARBUSTER!
"DRONE REPORTS EGG DETONATED ON FERGUSSON AT 0910 ORDNANCE ESTIMATES FIRST STELLAR FLARE AT 1209. INFORM ADMIRAL SHIMAMURA"

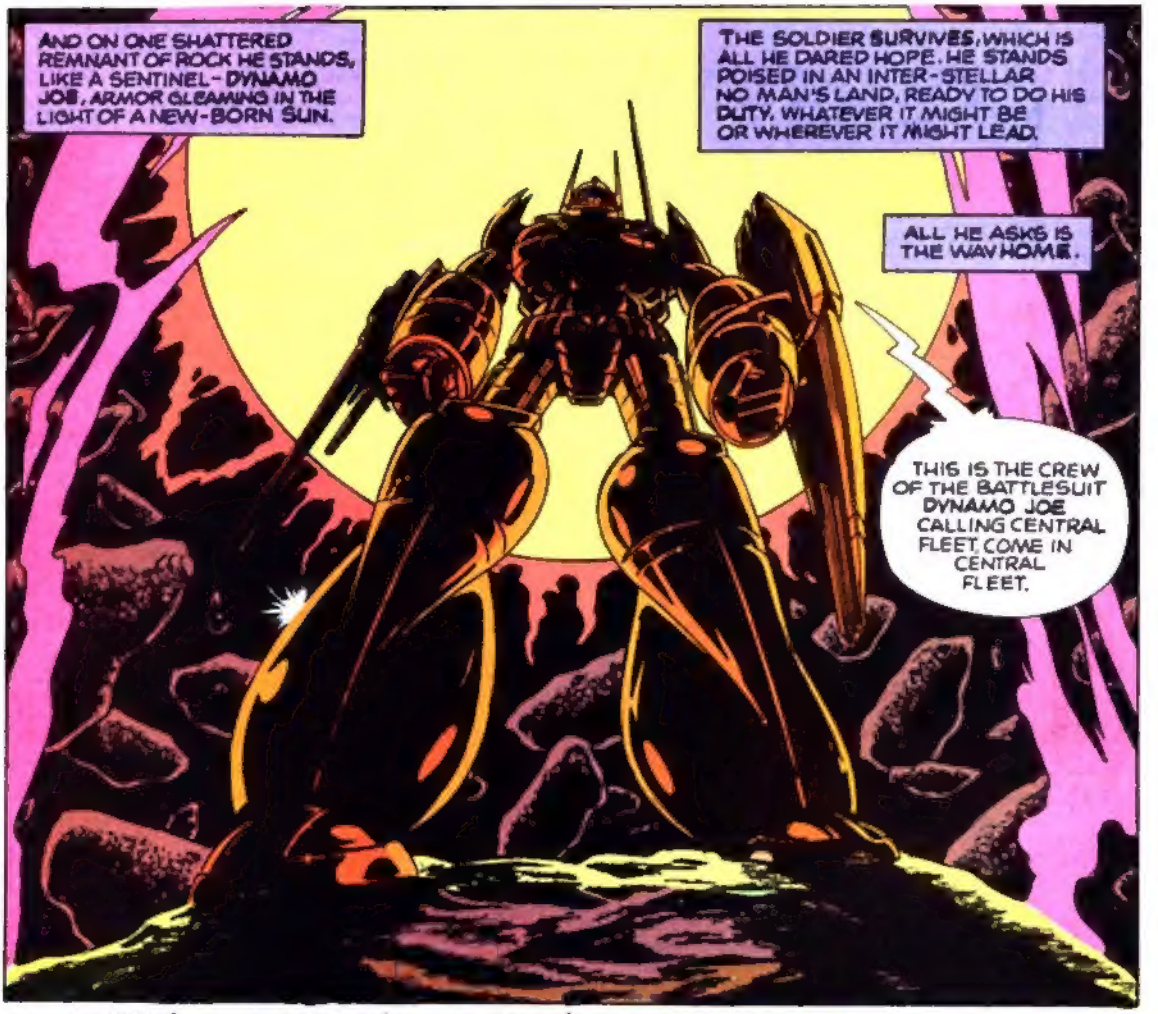
TIME: 1132 HOURS LIFTOFF IN 30 MINUTES SECURE YOURSELVES BACK THERE
JOE WASN'T DESIGNED FOR FOUR, LADY AND ANYWAY WHO ASKED YA?
MY ISN'T THIS COZY?
POMRU.
AWR HAIRBALLS! EVEN THE CIVILIANS OUTRANK ME!
COMMENCING TERTIARY COUNTDOWN SYSTEMS CHECK
WITH ALL DUE RESPECTS, LIEUTENANT, WE'VE ALREADY DONE THIS, SHOULDN'T WE JUST GET AIR-BORNE?
LIEUTENANT, DISCIPLINE HAS ITS PLACE, SO LONG AS IT DOESN'T WASTE TIME?
DISCIPLINE, SGT PARO! DISCIPLINE! BACKBONE OF THE MILITARY, CORNERSTONE OF THE IMPERIUM, I HAD THOUGHT
READY BACK THERE, POMRU?
ROGER-DOKEY SARGE!
SO, PARO'S AN IMPERIAL, HMM? INTERESTING
BEEP! P! P!
POMRU! WHAT'S ON THE SCREENS?
BOGIES, SARGE!
COMING UP FAST BEHIND!


SCHWA
SCHWA
SCHWA
DAMNIT! ENEMY SWARM! CAN'T DEPLOY WEAPONS WITHOUT WRECKING THE LAUNCH PLATFORM!
TO HELL WITH THE COUNTDOWN! WE'RE GOING STARSIDE NOW!
CLIK
SHWOM!
"DRONE REPORT. 1203. FERGUSON PREPARING TO FLARE. INFORM THE ADMIRAL."
WE'RE ALOFT, SARGE, BUT WE GOT BOGIES ON OUR BUTT, CLOSING FAST!

KICK IN THE AFTERBURNERS! MAYBE WE CAN OUTRUN THEM!
DISCIPLINE, LIEUTENANT. DISCIPLINE. LET THEM GET A BIT CLOSER FIRST.
SCHWA
SCHWA
SCHWA
FAADI DDDDDDDD
INITIATING AFTERBURNER COUNTDOWN SEQUENCE. 10... 9... 8...
765432ONE!
COME ON ALREADY!
NOW.
FWOM!
KEEEEE
KEEEEE


THEY SUCCEEDED. THEY LOST.
THEY ESCAPED THE MOON ONLY TO FIND THE FLEET GONE.
AND FERGUSSON COMMENCED ITS TRANSFORMATION.
FERGUSSON 8 IS THE FARTHEST MOON FROM THE PLANET. I'M GOING TO TRY AND PLACE IT BETWEEN US AND THE BRUNT OF THE EXPLOSION.
MAYBE.
OH GAWD! WE'RE DEAD!
BEYOND THAT, WE'LL HAVE TO HOPE THE SUIT CAN TAKE IT!

THE FLARES AT LAST SUBSIDE AND A NEW STAR BURNS LIKE A LAMP IN THE VOID.
RINGING IT IS DEBRIS, ALL THAT IS LEFT OF ITS FORMER MOONS. SCATTERED IN THE NEW ASTEROID BELT IS THE FLOTSAM AND JETSAM THAT HAS MARKED THE PASSING OF TWO GREAT GALACTIC ARMIES.


AND ON ONE SHATTERED REMNANT OF ROCK HE STANDS, LIKE A SENTINEL - DYNAMO JOE, ARMOR GLEAMING IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW-BORN SUN.
THE SOLDIER SURVIVES, WHICH IS ALL HE DARED HOPE. HE STANDS POISED IN AN INTER-STELLAR NO MAN'S LAND, READY TO DO HIS DUTY, WHATEVER IT MIGHT BE OR WHEREVER IT MIGHT LEAD.
ALL HE ASKS IS THE WAY HOME.
THIS IS THE CREW OF THE BATTLESUIT DYNAMO JOE CALLING CENTRAL FLEET. COME IN CENTRAL FLEET.

COME IN, CENTRAL FLEET.
COME IN, CENTRAL FLEET
COME IN...
BUT THERE IS ONLY SILENCE.
-FIN-